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Children from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds require special attention from counselors and other school personnel. Public schools often reflect a middle-class orientation and value structure. As a result, a large proportion of the school's activites, expectations, and standards are partially alien to those of most of its disadvantaged pupils. The counselor may have to reexamine his approach in the light of the needs of the disadvantaged child.

Characteristics of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds which the counselor can use as general background material in counseling include: inadequate self-image; one or more years behind age-group in school; frequent tardiness, absenteeism or truancy; inability to communicate adequately either in writing or in speaking; a lack of knowledge of or feeling for school routine; retardation in reading; poor performance on tests; and hostility to authority.

A counselor can begin to explore the problems of disadvantaged students by reading the literature, consulting with others engaged in the work, and visiting other special programs. The counselor can identify disadvantaged children through case studies of pupils absent for long periods, identification of potential dropouts, and home visits. The responsibilities of the counselor include developing home-school relationships and remedial and tutorial services, expanding educational and vocational horizons, working with other staff members, developing community relationships, and working toward a positive counseling relationship. A heightened concern for the disadvantaged child can help the school to provide a more positive influence for pupils and their parents so that more pupils will remain in school to graduate and to take advantage of their potentialties.

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GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

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GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED PUPILS

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Bureau of Guidance
Albany, N.Y. 12224
1965

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Foreword

One of the current decade's most compelling and over-riding challenges to education is the provision of both equitable and optimal educational opportunity for each and every child. This, of course, has been the goal and commitment of educators in New York State for many generations. Yesterday's challenge, however, continues to confront us today and, in light of a changing and growing society, its dimensions have become increasingly complex and perplexing. In the sixties, the challenge of educational opportunity for all involves also numerous other educational challenges and issues: appropriate programs to prepare future citizens for an automated, technological, and urban world of work; the large number of high school dropouts and unemployed young adults; the problems of racial imbalance and the school integration of minority group youngsters; the contrast of impoverished and destitute individuals living in an abundant and affluent society, to mention a few.

The challenge is one for every individual and professional group and agency. That the New York State Education Department has recognized and accepted the challenge is a matter of record. Some of its recent demonstration projects as administered by the Bureau of Guidance are cases in point: Project ABLE, a program to encourage compensatory provisions for culturally disadvantaged pupils; Project STEP, a work-study program for potential school dropouts; Project Talent Search, an intensified program of guidance and other services for underachieving pupils; Project Re-entry, a summer program of guidance service for potential school dropouts.

Few would deny that the school guidance counselor has a significant contribution to make in this effort. To facilitate the work of the counselor with one aspect of the problem, that of providing suitable educational programs for educationally disadvantaged pupils, the present publication has been developed by the Bureau, with the financial support of NDEA, Title V-A. This publication reviews the counselor's role and presents suggested guidance program activities for these pupils. Mrs. Sadie Schneider, Counselor, Washington Irving Junior High School, Schenectady, and Mr. Owen Peagler, Counselor, East View Junior High School, White Plains, served as consultants to the Bureau of Guidance in its preparation. Dr. Bernard A. Kaplan, Associate in Education Guidance, Bureau of Guidance, and Coordinator of Projects ABLE, STEP, Talent Search, and Re-entry in the Bureau, worked with Mrs. Schneider and Mr. Peagler in the preparation of this publication and edited the final manuscript.

E. R. Van Kleeck
Assistant Commissioner for
Pupil Personnel Services
and Adult Education

May 1, 1965

Introduction

This booklet is addressed to counselors and other school personnel who have a responsibility for counseling children from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds. In general, the group considered here will consist of children from families living in low socio-economic areas of the community. This is the group considered by the Educational Policies Commission in its 1962 publication, Education and the Disadvantaged American. These are the children now in the schools who must have special attention if they are to profit from their current school opportunities and, consequently, to cope successfully with life in the United States in the next fifty years.

It is generally conceded that the public schools as they exist today often reflect a middle class orientation and value structure. Many school policy makers, administrators and professional staff members at all levels are committed to this middle class posture. As a result, a large proportion of the school's activities, expectations, and standards are at least partially alien to those of most of its disadvantaged pupils.* Unless there is a new sensitivity on the part of school people to the special problems faced by these students, a continuous chain of frustration and isolation will be forged that will bind still another generation of people to unproductive, unfulfilled lives.

Current literature and pilot projects concerned with the disadvantaged have revealed these significant facts:

Children from disadvantaged homes can learn.
Their parents do care.
School can make a difference in achievement and aspirations.

Counselors share the responsibility with all personnel in the public schools of New York State to use every means possible to help break the cycle of poverty and ignorance which in the past (but hopefully not in the future) has cheated children in our State of their rightful heritage as productive, useful citizens. It is toward this goal that this booklet is written. We sincerely hope that it stimulates serious thought about the problem and provides some basic guidelines for immediate action to the end that disadvantaged pupils are helped to take full advantage of all the

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* Elizabeth Drews and Nadine Lambert, in successive chapters, discuss the present inability of school and society to meet the needs of a large number of its disadvantaged youth in Guidance and the School Dropout, NEA, 1964.

educational opportunities that are or will become available in school and outside of school to enable them to live richer, more rewarding lives as adults and citizens in the America of tomorrow.

Irving Ratchick, Chief
Bureau of Guidance

I

How Do We Recognize the Disadvantaged Child in School?

Children who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, rural, urban or suburban, have certain characteristics that educators must come to recognize and accept. It is true that children who come from middle class and upper class backgrounds may have some of these traits, but generally not to the same extent and not in such overwhelming proportions. As counselors observe these traits, they must avoid two serious pitfalls:

1. The "what can you expect from someone with that background" attitude.

2. The "well, those. . . . are all alike" attitude.

Counselors can use the characteristics listed below as a starting point and as a general background against which individual appraisal and counseling can be conducted and guidance activities organized. This section will present some of the characteristics of the disadvantaged child in school, a description of the low socio-economic family, and examine some of the current myths perpetrated about this segment of our society.

The disadvantaged child in school can be described as one who usually has several of the following characteristics:

-He has an inadequate self-image.

-He is one or more years behind his age group in school.

-He is frequently tardy, absent or truant.

-He is unable to communicate adequately either in writing or in speaking in order to achieve school success.

-He is retarded in reading.

-He has a lack of knowledge of or feeling for school routine.

-He generally performs poorly on tests.

-He appears to be a slow learner or is an underachiever.

-He is hostile to authority.

-He is apathetic or indifferent toward school.

-He fails to do homework assignments regularly.

-He has an anti-intellectual attitude.

-He has limited or unrealistic aspirations and long-term goals.

-He does not participate in extra-curricular activities, with some outstanding exceptions (frequently in sports) to the contrary.

-His parents often appear disinterested in school and do not come to school-related functions unless sent for.

What are the characteristics of the disadvantaged family? From a sociological point of view the counselor finds that most of these families have one characteristic in common: they are poor. The wage earners in the family:

-hold semi-skilled or unskilled jobs in the urban community or on the marginal farms in the rural areas

-have little informal education, usually no more than the equivalent of 6 or 8 years of schooling

-are more likely to be members of ethnic minority groups

-are frequently the last to be hired and the first to be fired because of a combination of the aforementioned factors.

In this segment of society we find the highest concentration of welfare cases and of people who are discriminated against because of their poverty or their membership in minority groups. We find also more single parent families and more "latch key" children (both of whose parents are working).

Among the problems frequently faced by these families are those of:

-desertion
-chronic illness
-prejudice
-illegitimacy
-delinquency
-alcoholism
-inadequate housing
-unemployment

Generally, we find families with values that differ from many of those of our predominantly middle class culture. For example, these families may have very depressed levels of aspiration. Their energies and resources must be spent to "get by" rather than to "get ahead." A large number seem to lack the motivation or the capacity to cope with their problems or to improve their situation. There is a downgrading of intellectualism and the value of formal education. Members of these families have greater respect for skills that do not involve abstract learning. Especially significant from a counseling point of view, we find that these families must of necessity live generally for today leaving them with little hope or positive outlook in planning for the future.

However, as counselors become acquainted with these families they usually find many other characteristics that are not as immediately obvious. They may find, for example, that there is unanticipated stability in an extended family organization--the many aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents in the child's immediate environment. They often find ingeniousness and resourcefulness in the pursuits of <u>self</u>-selected goals. They discover that these families have a capacity for meaningful and loyal personal relationships. As an extension of this, the adolescent peer culture, which is not school oriented, exerts an extraordinary influence on the adolescent. There also tends to be a freedom from self-blame as well as a capacity for informality and warm humor. Whether these characteristics are regarded as positives, however,

frequently depends on the point of view of the observer--be he the counselor, the teacher, the parent or a neighbor.

Despite the fact that we know so much about disadvantaged families today, many myths about them have wide circulation with little basis in fact. This has occurred largely because of the lack of communication and association between the underprivileged groups and the larger society. It is important to examine these misconceptions in order to fully understand the people we are describing:

Myth: Poor people like being on welfare.

Fact: Most studies, and the opinions of those who work with families on welfare, reveal that the majority of people do not like to be on welfare. They are anxious to find work that will support their families and give them a sense of dignity and self-worth. However, they often lack the skills necessary for regular employment that will satisfy their economic needs.[1]

Myth: Disadvantaged people have no culture.[2]

Fact: The underprivileged do have cultures of their own but some of their values are different from the dominant middle class culture of our society. These cultures of the underprivileged are rich in many positive ways; for example, the current popularity of hootenannies derives from the kind of folk humor and music that has been enjoyed by the rural poor for generations.

Myth: Parents from disadvantaged groups do not care about the education of their children.

Fact: There is concern but there is a lack of opportunity and ability to communicate this concern. The overwhelming pressure of coping with hunger, disease and despair prevents parents from expressing concern at the time that the school may expect them to or in a way the school approves. They feel their inability and are hesitant to take positive action.

Myth: Parents of disadvantaged groups have no aspirations for their children.

1. The Wasted Americans, by Edgar May. Harper and Row, 1964

2. Frank Riessman discusses this myth in greater detail in his book, The Culturally Deprived Child, Harper, 1962.

Fact: These parents do not know how to go about setting realistic goals. They may also be discouraged as a result of their own experience. Consequently their aspirations may be unrealistic, but they exist.

Myth: All members of minority groups are underprivileged or all of the underprivileged are members of minority groups.

Fact: Members of minority groups belong to all socio-economic levels, with a growing middle class. On the other hand, minority groups are only a part of the total who are labelled underprivileged or culturally disadvantaged.

Myth: A bright or talented child will be successful in spite of his disadvantaged environment, e.g., James Baldwin.

Fact: It is true that occasionally a bright disadvantaged child will work his way up with no outside help. However, study has shown that such incidents are the exception and many bright or talented children will not be successful or as successful as they could be without the significant concern and intervention of others.

Myth: Disadvantaged children are more knowledgeable about the facts of life.

Fact: In reality what appears to be worldly knowledge is often a facade behind which the child hides his uncertainity and ignorance or misinformation.

Myth: Disadvantaged students are indifferent to teachers.

Fact: These students tend to be more sensitive to feelings that teachers have towards them. They are quick to sense even unspoken rejection.

Myth: These children cannot be "reached" by teachers and counselors.

Fact: Most can be "reached" but the approach may have to be different. The aim of this booklet is to present some of the approaches that have proven to be successful.

II

Counselor Activities

Because counselors across the country are still experimenting with techniques to reach disadvantaged children more effectively, this booklet will offer only selected reports of experiences that have proven successful for some counselors.* Obviously, recommended practices may work in some instances but not in others or these may be successful with some counselors, but not with others. This section will present ways in which a counselor can begin to explore the problem in his school. These will be followed by suggested approaches and techniques he may then wish to employ.

The counselor can begin to gain insights into the characteristics of the disadvantaged by:

-reading the literature (a bibliography is available from the Bureau of Guidance)

-consulting with others engaged in this work

-visiting other districts and special programs

-intensive and extensive counseling with small groups of children on an experimental basis to learn first-hand of their problems and to test some of the various concepts and techniques suggested in the literature

-moving out of the confines of his office to meet the children and parents who do not traditionally seek him out.

The counselor can further identify the disadvantaged children in his building through:

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* If the reader has used an effective guidance practice or approach not included in this booklet, please submit it for use in further revisions of this publication to the Bureau of Guidance, State Education Department, Albany, N.Y. 12224. Please use the special sheet (the last page of this publication) for this purpose.

-case studies of pupils absent for more than twenty days in a given year (when not accounted for by long illness)

-identification of potential dropouts

-consulting with other members of the pupil personnel team (nurses, psychologists, attendance teachers, social workers, visiting teachers)

-individual interviews with pupils and their parents

-home visits

-communication with social agencies serving the school population

-consultation with teachers

-examination of cumulative folders

-participation as a volumteer in community agencies and programs

-exploration of the community by visiting neighborhood stores, places of employment, recreation, and areas where members of the community congregate.

1. Developing Home-School Relationships[3]

One of the responsibilities of the counselor is to work with parents in such a way that the school and the home complement each other in helping the pupil progress academically as far as possible. It is extremely important that mutual understandings be achieved.

Counselors who have made extensive home visits feel that there is no other single technique that is more effective for helping school personnel to understand disadvantaged families; conversely, no single technique has been more effective as a means of communicating to "hard to reach" families that the school really cares. However, coun-

3. School-Home Partnerships in Depressed Urban Neighborhoods, 1964, by Gene Fusco, U.S. Office of Education, Washington 25, D.C., presents a fuller treatment of this subject including actual practices in use in 5 large cities.

selors have found that home visits are more successful when:

-home visits are made initially for get-acquainted reasons rather than for crisis situations.

-the counselor or other school personnel makes his visit because of his genuine concern about the child's well-being in school.

-the counselor has some information about the child which is of importance to the family.

-an appointment has been made in advance either by telephone, by exchange of messages or by ringing a doorbell and saying, "When can I come back for a conference?".

-parents are given a choice of having the interview at home or in school. If the counselor indicates a sincere willingness to come to the home as a convenience to the parent, experience has shown that an overwhelming proportion of parents will extend the invitation to visit them at home. Many mothers have no one with whom to leave younger children or feel self-conscious about their lack of schooling, verbal ability, or appearance in school surroundings; consequently, they are often quite receptive to a home conference.

-counselors are not judgmental during the visit.

With many families, counselors have had to modify their expectation that parents indicate an interest in their children's school work by coming to the school. These counselors have had to continue a program of reaching these families at home. In most instances counselors making home visits have found that the parents are concerned with the child's school progress and pleased with the school's interest in their child.

Counselors have been successful to some extent in bringing parents into school when they:

-have extended personal invitations to parents for school conferences.

-have developed programs based on parents' expressed interests and needs. (For example, a sewing, knitting and crocheting class was organized in one junior high school. There were only three women present at the first meeting but eleven regular participants at the final spring session asked for a comtinuance of the meetings in the fall. A junior high school homemaking teacher led the group; the parent coordinator attended each week to participate in the

discussions that developed.)

-have staggered the hours of meeting times. There are many fathers and mothers working on second and third shifts. Some counselors have conducted informal surveys of the community to determine what hours would be best for parent conferences in their schools.

-have arranged for parents in a deprived neighborhood to meet weekly with an attendance teacher for morning coffee in each other's homes. The attendance teacher supplied the cookies and leadership; in this arrangement, the parents were eager to discuss their children and receptive to school conferences suggested later.

Often, the counselor will find it appropriate to consult with the school social worker or attendance teacher concerning the circumstances involving a particular pupil. If there is no school social worker or similar service available to the school, in some instances counselors may need to assume temporarily the role of a case worker. If a family he has been working with faces a sudden medical crisis or a serious financial crisis, the counselor may have to mobilize community resources to alleviate a severe "reality problem" before he is able to resume the more traditional role of helping the child to solve school oriented problems. For example, one counselor found that a family had no food in the house. The family had moved just before the welfare check was due; the check, of course, was sent to the old address. The counselor called the welfare department to arrange for immediate help. This was the first positive personal relationship this particular family had had with any individual school figure.

Counselors working with disadvantaged families have learned to measure success not by the numbers of parents attending school meetings but by the <u>individual</u> contacts and involvement they have been able to achieve. Better attendance at group meetings then slowly follows.

2. Remedial and Tutorial Services

As counselors have gained insights into the needs of disadvantaged children, they have worked with other school personnel to arrange help for these pupils who are academically deficient, especially in those areas involving language skills.

In some school districts counselors have played an active part in initiating afternoon and evening programs of supervised study and tutorial services. This has involved pinpointing the need, arranging for appropriate and convenient facilities, and providing for trained supervision. Many of these programs have developed because the counselor has recognized that overcrowded housing conditions, lack of books and study materials make it virtually impossible for a majority of underprivileged children to study at home. These programs, on the other hand, provide adequate supervision, availability of reference materials such as dictionaries and encyclopedias, sufficient room for each student to spread out his work, and quiet surroundings conducive to study.

In areas where other agencies have assumed or will assume the responsibility for the development of a supervised study program (in one community a neighborhood settlement house developed the tutorial services; in another, a neighborhood church in cooperation with the public schools organized a remedial reading program), the counselor is frequently a key person in identifying pupils who would benefit from such a program and for encouraging these pupils and their parents to take advantage of the study opportunities offered.

Elsewhere, counselors have reviewed with individual pupils, and

pupils in groups, their study habits and skills. Frequently, special materials such as check-lists and handbooks have been developed and utilized by counselors for this purpose. Where supervised study periods are part of the school day, counselors have worked with teachers in developing a school-wide program for improving the individual pupil's study skills.

3. Expanding Educational and Vocational Horizons

One of the greatest challenges for counselors who work with disadvantaged children lies in the area of helping them develop wider and more realistic educational and vocational horizons. Counselors have found that many disadvantaged children have confused or unrealistic goals, and few role models in their immediate environment with whom to identify. They have also found that parents are more easily discouraged when their children do not meet immediate school success and tend as a result to under-value the benefits of formal education.[4]

Upper elementary grade teachers can be encouraged to introduce concepts of many kinds of jobs, not only in the immediate neighborhood, but in the entire country. Many teachers are able to integrate this with their regular program. Counselors have encouraged teachers at all grade levels to include career implications of their subject matter as much as possible. On invitation, counselors have participated in portions of career units in English and social studies classes at the secondary school level.

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4. Willa Norris presents an alternative to this problem in her book, Occupational Information in the Elementary School, 1964, Science Research Associates.

At the junior and senior high school levels counselors have initiated trips to colleges and career-oriented trips to industries. Personnel representatives in colleges, businesses and industrial establishments have been most cooperative in working with counselors to make this a valuable experience.

A career-oriented trip requiries particularly careful planning. Counselors may meet in advance with officials of the institution or business to be visited to describe the needs of the children who will be making the trip. In the school, preliminary meetings are held with the pupils to prepare them for the experience. (In one city hospital a staff member developed a tour which showed the importance and interrelatedness of all members of the staff including the housekeeping department, the clerical staff, the laboratory team, the physicians, and the various kinds of nurses. The counselor was able to use this experience in subsequent group discussions to indicate the many paths a pupil could take with a single interest in helping the sick. In a large industry a public relations officer performed a similar function by indicating all the different kinds of training and work that were necessary to produce a single product.)

Counselors have used many devices for introducing successful role models to pupils. These adults are frequently people who come from the same neighborhood or the same ethnic background as the disadvantaged groups in the school. In terms of the needs of our total society, even when there is not a large disadvantaged group or a large ethnic minority in a given school population, many counselors have felt that it is important that successful people from varied backgrounds be introduced

to the student body. It is desirable, in utilizing role models and identification figures, that counselors also obtain the services of young adults and older pupils for this purpose. Sometimes, successful college students or high school pupils are invited by the counselor to participate in tutoring programs and in informal group guidance sessions for these pupils.

Parents have been regularly involved in individual conferences with the counselor to discuss job trends and vocational opportunities of significance to their children. In helping pupils and parents to establish realistic and attainable goals counselors learn to concentrate upon the inferences of what the parents say and not necessarily the initial response proffered. The disadvantaged parent, when asked whether he wishes his son or daughter to go on to college says, "Yes," as does the middle class parent. The problem here, however, is that he does not really believe that this is an attainable goal. Counselors in working with these pupils and their parents have begun early:

1. To discuss job trends and wider job horizons. Especially with Negroes and other non-whites has the counselor had to emphasize and reemphasize that the current social climate has created opportunities today which were non-existant yesterday; that the opportunities for <u>qualified</u> personnel will be even greater tomorrow.

2. To indicate the extensiveness of job families. Very often the despair is expressed in terms of, "If I can't get to college I might just as well give up." It is important that the counselor explore with the parent and pupil the educational, vocational and personal requirements needed for various jobs and that the counselor help the pupil <u>each year</u> to examine his own school experience and potential as they relate to stated goals, tentative though they may be.

3. To discuss the many ways that pupils have been able to finance their education. It is important to begin these discussions early before the pupils and their families have become too

"jelled" in their feelings that a goal of high school graduation or college is unattainable. Both parents and pupils need to understand information about:

a. Public college curricula available at limited cost.

b. Two-year college programs.

c. Scholarships available, and the need to communicate with counselors early for this help.

d. College and high school work-study programs.

e. Loan funds--private, governmental, college.

f. Industry-sponsored apprentice training programs which may lead to the equivalent of a college education.

g. Opportunities for part-time jobs and summer experiences for high school and college students.

h. Educational opportunities in the armed forces.

i. Industry-financed college education programs.[5]

"Try-out" and part-time work experiences have been developed by counselors for disadvantaged pupils in some communities. Counselors have worked with others to arrange for sheltered workshop or basic skill work laboratories in the school business or vocational arts department.

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5. For further information, consult the following publications.
   a. How About College Financing? A Guide for Parents of College-Bound Students. American School Counselor Association, 1605 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. 1964.
   b. Opening the Door to College Study Through the New York State Regents Scholarship Examination. The State Education Department, Albany, N.Y. 1964.
   c. Going to College in New York State. The State Education Department, Albany, N.Y. 1964.
   d. Summary Bulletin, State University of New York. State University of New York, Central Administrative Office, Albany 1, N.Y. Fall 1963.

Part-time placement arrangements with neighborhood agencies, civic groups and businessmen have also been developed, some of which include direct school supervision of the pupil at the work station. (The Department's School-to-Work Program (STEP) is an example of such a program.) Of course, the local office of the State Employment Service is frequently an invaluable resource in this respect. Counselors have found it especially helpful to review with these pupils their impressions of their work experiences.

Counselor contacts with and personal visits to places of business, industry and placement in the community, especially those which have bearing on the future employment of these boys and girls, are beneficial. In some localities, the local Chamber of Commerce has sponsored a series of on-the-scene industrial and business seminars especially designed for school counselors. These and other such activities, including greater attention to vocational counseling, will be given increased emphasis as the Bureau of Guidance assists school districts in implementation of the vocational guidance provisions of the Vocational Education Act of 1963.

Another activity that has been reported by school counselors as effective with disadvantaged youth is that of cultural enrichment. Usually, this activity involves members of the teaching staff. However, it is not uncommon for the counselor to serve as a faculty consultant for this purpose or to himself develop and organize, with staff participation, a series of cultural enrichment experiences for individual pupils or small pupil groups. The usual aim of this activity is to expose the pupil to the many rich opportunities and possibilities that exist in his environment but with which he is often quite unfamiliar. Frequently,

these experiences include field trips to sundry places in the neighborhood and the larger community and to nearby urban centers. Trips have been arranged to serve cultural, curriculum-related, vocational, recreational and social-growth purposes. Trips to museums, concerts, athletic contests, laboratories, airports, government buildings, college campuses, historical sites, parks, hospitals and industrial plants have been conducted. At times the trip may be no more than a ride through the country in a counselor's or teacher's car; in other instances, it may be a formal overnight bus trip to a metropolitan center. It should also be pointed out here that enrichment experiences are not limited solely to field trips; many opportunities exist or can be arranged to take place within the school classroom and school plant. (Project ABLE and Project Talent Search, two current Department demonstration programs for culturally disadvantaged pupils, incorporate a large number of additional guidance activities and services of the foregoing type.[6])

4. Working with Other Staff Members

If disadvantaged children are to be given an equal opportunity to receive a meaningful education, the entire educational team must work together to achieve this goal. Counselors must call upon the resources of the entire faculty to gain insights for helping individual children and they, in turn, have a responsibility for transmitting knowledge they have gained to other staff members.

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6. Materials describing Project ABLE and Project Talent Search may be obtained by writing the Bureau of Guidance, New York State Education Department, Albany, New York 12224.

Counselors have found that available standardized test data have often been inadequate in indicating the potential of disadvantaged children. Students from disadvantaged homes are frequently poor test takers and often come to the testing situation with a frame of reference quite different from that of the majority of pupils. Counselors can assist teachers to understand test scores from this point of view. In addition, guidance personnel have often requested subjective evaluations from teachers (and other professional personnel in the community working with this population) in order to gain additional information that might help to determine real potential. Sociograms of pupil groups or classes have also been helpful in identifying leaders and "isolates" of a given group.

Counselors have learned to work very closely with attendance teachers, school nurse-teachers and school social workers as a means of keeping abreast of the current problems faced by these families. As a result of information gained in this manner (about serious family illness, for example) counselors have been able to help children ride out a crisis by support in school and by gaining the understanding and assistance of the faculty.

Counselors and other members of the pupil personnel staff have arranged case conferences as a method of creating awareness of the problems of the disadvantaged. These also serve the purpose of indicating that though these families have many similar problems, each individual pupil has a unique situation which requires individual attention. So that the staff can extend its knowledge with regard to the disadvantaged child and his education, counselors have actively participated in

organizing faculty in-service courses or programs. Counselors and school administrators have encouraged staff members who have already developed ways of working effectively with disadvantaged children to share their techniques with others. The faculty workshop, on released time, is an arrangement that has been utilized for this purpose.

When problems develop with regard to pupil achievement, the counselor has involved teachers in home visits to discuss the situation. This is especially profitable when the counselor has already established a prior positive relationship with the family.

5. Developing Community Relationships[7]

Many counselors have found that they gain additional insights into the needs and characteristics of their pupils by observing them and their parents as they are engaged in community activities. As they have become an accepted part of the community, counselors develop greater sensitivity and a better understanding of the many problems the disadvantaged pupil encounters on a daily basis.

Counselors have developed effective relationships with the community groups by:

-attending large group functions, for example, church socials or entertainments.

-serving on communtiy agency boards.

-volunteering to work with children in clubs sponsored by social agencies. (One counselor, for example, is a club leader for a group of boys who meet at the local Boys' Club.)

7. Community-sponsored programs to help youth enter the world of work are described in the publication, Design for Community Action, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington 25, D.C. 1962

-serving on youth committees of service clubs in order to involve other citizens in working with the disadvantaged. (For example, one counselor was able to convince a Kiwanis youth committee to supply funds to pay high school tutors. Another counselor helped a community group organize and conduct cultural enrichment trips for disadvantaged children as a "Big Brother" activity.)

-involving community agencies in after-school and evening supervised study and tutoring programs.

-serving on committees for neighborhood betterment.

-making home visits.

6. Working Towards a Positive Counseling Relationship

The child from the disadvantaged home frequently meets the counselor for the first time as a result of a referral from a classroom teacher or a principal who is reporting a negative school experience. It is important, when possible, that counselors establish a routine of trying to see each of their counselees early in the school year for a get-acquainted session. When a problem arises and a pupil needs help, he may be more ready for a counseling relationship if the first contact is not a negative one.

When a counselor is asked to work with a pupil in a moment of crisis, he must be prepared to cancel all engagements except the most urgent. Disadvantaged pupils seem to sense rejection quickly, and counselors may not get a second chance.

Culturally disadvantaged pupils are likely to have the deep conviction that no one in authority is really interested in them except as they may or may not conform to school rules and regulations. It may take much listening on the part of the counselor to reach the heart of the problem the pupil is facing.

Counselors find that they must make a special effort to accept

the pupil where he is in terms of his present values and attitudes. To superimpose the counselor's values on the pupil or to be judgmental in manner or in speech will surely retard or prevent the development of necessary rapport.

One counselor found that it was effective to develop a counseling agreement in advance with pupils with whom she wanted to spend more time. At the end of the first or second interview the question was presented in this way: "I'd like to spend more time talking to you. Can we agree to talk with each other for five or six times so that we can get better acquainted?" Even suspicious pupils agreed to the contract despite the fact that they were still questioning the counselor's motives. Where the relationship was successful, the counselor found that friends of these pupils more readily availed themselves of the counselor's services.

Each counselor has his own way of organizing an interview but counselors have found that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to express themselves more freely about past experiences than about their current relationships. Questions concerning the following can reveal significant feelings and attitudes of the pupil toward his home and school: early elementary school experiences; favorite teachers; learning to read; parental attitude toward his school experiences; home responsibilities; et cetera.

Similar interviews with the parents are also helpful. Here, however, a caution must be advanced: it is never advisable to ask prying questions. Much information will come out in conversation revolving around school-centered problems. Parental attitudes about the pupil as

an infant, the child's early developmental history, the parents' concept of their child's previous school experience can all be helpful in reaching a better understanding of the problem at hand.

Counselors have successfully worked with small groups of pupils in group counseling sessions. This has enabled them to see more pupils at regular intervals. Furthermore, this activity provides these pupils with opportunities for open and free discussion and for mutual exchange in solving similar problems. As a result children in these groups have felt more free to seek out counselor services in helping them with their individual problems.[8]

Counselors have often found that after taking small groups of pupils on trips--to colleges, plays, industry--extremely positive individual counseling sessions have followed. These interviews are generally initiated by pupils who become better acquainted with the counselor on the trip and perhaps see him for the first time as an individual with whom they can develop a friendly relationship.

8. For additional material on group counseling, see, among others, the work of Ben Cohn, Margaret Bennett, Helen Driver, Robert Hoppock, J.L. Moreno, and Jane Warters.

III

In Summary

If the counselor has traditionally seen his role as one in which the individual counseling interview is the heart of the guidance program, he may have to reexamine his approach to this function in the light of the needs of the disadvantaged child.[9] Many contacts may be required before a continuing relationship is established, and counselors will find they must take more time to follow up on those who do not respond readily. Children who grow up in homes that distrust school authorities (and this includes counselors) usually resist offers of help. Successful counselors have learned to experience rejection and indifference and to expect failures along with their successes. Above all, they have learned that they must constantly demonstrate to these pupils their sincerity, their interest, and their respect.

In order to become more effective, it may be necessary for the counselor to assume temporarily many different roles as he relates to the pupils and their parents. Coach, club sponsor, trip leader, supervising study teacher, home visitor, participant in community affairs--these may be the other roles of the counselor. He must become involved in the "environment" of the disadvantaged.

The counselor who works with the disadvantaged must be both ingenious and pragmatic. He must gain insights into the needs of

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9. Part III, by Dugald Arbuckle and Edmund Gordon, in the book, Guidance and the School Dropout, National Education Association, 1964, presents a discussion in greater detail of the changing role of the counselor in working with disadvantaged pupils.

disadvantaged children and then help them to establish realistic goals and to formulate and proceed with steps in attaining these goals through the opportunity afforded by the schools and in the community. Beyond this he must find ways of transmitting information to teachers as to the learning patterns and problems of disadvantaged children; he must enlist staff support in devising means of helping these children to reach their maximum potential and in establishing and maintaining a meaningful relationship with their parents.

Disadvantaged pupils come to the schools with a different frame of reference from pupils from middle class families. They need more support, more experiences than their environment provides, and a deeper understanding by the staff of their needs in school. Counselors have learned that they cannot reach these children by remaining in their offices; they must extend themselves physically, psychologically and emotionally if they are to be of service.

In the past, the disadvantaged child has been confronted too often with unpleasant experiences in school. His parents have been contacted most often by the school because of problems that have arisen rather than for reasons of a positive and helpful nature. Thus, it is characteristic of both parents and pupils that they have tended to be suspicious of school personnel who have expressed sudden interest in their problems and, consequently, they have been reluctant to communicate freely. Several demonstration projects have shown, however, that the counselor is considerably more effective when he is willing to extend himself and his services farther than usual to overcome this reluctance. Home visits, special evening appointments, a timely reminder of an

appointment, or patience in the face of repeatedly missed appointments are often helpful as means of "going more than halfway."

What results can be expected from a heightened concern for the disadvantaged child? Armed with an awareness of the possibilities for these pupils and with new approaches to the problems presented by them, counselors and other professional staff members can raise levels of achievement and aspiration. They can help the school provide a more positive influence for pupils and their parents to the end that more pupils will remain in school to graduate and to take advantage of their potentialities.

The counselor because of his training, experience, assigned role and his unique relationship with parents and pupils is in an ideal position to initiate new approaches to the academic problems of the disadvantaged. He must, however, <u>believe</u> that he can do something constructive in the face of a difficult problem. He must <u>believe</u> that he has an obligation to consider the special problems faced by these pupils. And he must <u>believe</u>, as stated earlier, that all children can learn, that parents do care, and that the school can produce significant change in the lives of disadvantaged pupils. In addition to this, he must work for desired goals even though indifference and apathy, in school and outside of school, may occasion temporary obstacles to progress.

Counselors readily admit that the task is not an easy or simple one. It is, however, a task to test their competency for a unique contribution in education. Acceptance of the challenge is not only commendable; it is urgent--both for the individual pupil concerned and for the future welfare of our country.

IV

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